

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9511
INFO USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
USDEL MBFR VIENNA
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 10970

EXDIS

BELGRADE FOR USDEL CSCE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, GW, UR, US
SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR GERMAN-SOVIET RELATIONS AFTER
GENSCHER'S VISIT TO MOSCOW

REFS: (A) MOSCOW 8743 (NOTAL); (B) MOSCOW 8761 (NOTAL);
(C) USNATO 5682 (NOTAL); (D) BONN 10119 (NOTAL);
(E) BONN 10162 (NOTAL); (F) BONN 10410; (G) BONN
10763 (NOTAL); (H) USBERLIN 1694 (NOTAL); (I)
BONN 5998 (NOTAL)

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SUMMARY: THE POSITIVE TREATMENT ACCORDED TO FOREIGN
MINISTER GENSCHER BY HIS SOVIET HOSTS DURING HIS RECENT
MOSCOW VISIT HAS AGAIN POSED THE QUESTION WHETHER THE
SOVIETS WOULD ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE THEIR RELATIONS WITH
THE FRG IN CASE US-SOVIET RELATIONS DETERIORATE. THE
GERMANS SEE SOME EVIDENCE OF THIS POSSIBILITY. IT WOULD

POSE SPECIAL PROBLEMS FOR THEM, BOTH BECAUSE IT COULD LEAD TO DOMESTIC DEBATE ABOUT HOW TO REACT AND ALSO BECAUSE THEY WOULD BE HARD PUT TO SUSTAIN BONN-MOSCOW DETENTE IF WASHINGTON-MOSCOW RELATIONS TURN SOUR. SCHMIDT MAY NOT WISH TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT IN THESE TERMS DURING HIS WASHINGTON VISIT, BUT HE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY WANT TO GET SOME PERSPECTIVE ON WHERE WE BELIEVE WE ARE GOING WITH THE SOVIETS. END SUMMARY

1. FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER'S RECENT VISIT TO MOSCOW REPRESENTED THE FIRST GERMAN-SOVIET SENIOR-LEVEL CONSULTATION OF THE DETENTE ERA TO TAKE PLACE AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF POTENTIALLY DETERIORATING US-SOVIET RELATIONS. THIS HAS GIVEN THE VISIT SOME IMPORTANCE IN GERMAN EYES, LEADING THE GERMANS NOT ONLY TO BRIEF US AT GREATER LENGTH THAN USUAL BUT ALSO REFLECTING SOME OF THE DILEMMAS THAT THE GERMANS FACE IN DEALING WITH THE SOVIET UNION IN THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE.

2. THE SOVIET ATTITUDE IN THE TALKS WITH GENSCHER, AS REPORTED TO US, WAS ONE OF GREAT FRIENDLINESS (ALTHOUGH, OF COURSE, FULL OF CUSTOMARY SOVIET HECTORING ON THE PERFDY OF THE WEST). IT WAS ALSO MARKED BY A CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE UNITED STATES AND WAS NOT FREE OF SUGGESTIONS, SUBTLE BY SOVIET STANDARD, THAT THE FRG SHOULD PREPARE FOR A MORE INDEPENDENT COURSE

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TOWARD MOSCOW BECAUSE OF THE "COMPLICATIONS" FOR US-SOVIET RELATIONS CREATED BY THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION.

3. THE GERMANS BELIEVE THAT THE VISIT ALSO REVEALED CONSIDERABLE DOMINANCE BY GROMYKO OVER BREZHNEV IN HANDLING GERMAN AND BERLIN AFFAIRS. GENSCHER'S INTIMATES HAVE SUPPLEMENTED SOME OF THE BRIEFINGS WE HAVE RECEIVED BY REPORTING THEIR IMPRESSION THAT, IN THE INSTANCES WHERE BREZHNEV HAD BOTH A CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND A FOREIGN MINISTRY PAPER IN FRONT OF HIM, HE GENERALLY CAME DOWN ON THE FOREIGN MINISTRY POSITION. THEY HAVE ALSO NOTED THAT, ALTHOUGH NEGOTIATIONS ON BERLIN CLAUSES IN THE PENDING FRG-SOVIET ACCORDS WILL CONTINUE BETWEEN VAN WELL AND BONDARENKO, THE SOVIETS HAVE REALLY MADE NO CONCESSIONS ON THAT ISSUE SO FAR (AND THE GERMANS ARE NOT PREPARED TO MAKE ANY EITHER).

4. SHOULD US-SOVIET RELATIONS SERIOUSLY DETERIORATE, A CRUCIAL QUESTION FOR THE FRG, AS WELL AS FOR US, WOULD BE WHETHER THE SOVIET UNION WOULD ATTEMPT TO SUSTAIN AND EVEN TO ADVANCE A DETENTE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FRG. WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING AT THIS FOR SOME TIME (REF I),

AS HAS THE FRG, BUT STILL REGARD THE EVIDENCE AS MIXED.

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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USMISSION USBERLIN
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WE WOULD ALSO DEFER TO EMBASSY MOSCOW'S EVALUATION.

--ON THE ONE HAND, IT APPEARS CLEAR THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS MAKING A CONCERTED EFFORT TO SUSTAIN POSITIVE ATMOSPHERICS WITH THE FRG (AND PERHAPS ALSO WITH OTHER WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES) WHILE ATTACKING THE US. BREZHNEV HAS EVEN GONE SO FAR AS TO ASK GENSCHER ABOUT US POLICY AND, IN THE PROCESS, TO GIVE GENSCHER AN OPPORTUNITY (WHICH HE REJECTED) TO DISSOCIATE HIMSELF FROM THAT POLICY. WE HAVE HAD A REPORT OF SEPARATE SOVIET APPROACHES TO THE FRG ON MBFR. MOREOVER, GENSCHER'S STAFF PEOPLE TELL US THEY ARE AMUSED TO NOTE THAT THE RUSSIANS HAVE SUDDENLY BECOME QUITE FRIENDLY
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TOWARD GENSCHER AFTER HAVING PILLORIED HIM MERCILESSLY FOR THE PAST YEAR. THEY SPECULATE THAT THIS REFLECTS NOT ONLY A GREATER SOVIET DISPOSITION TO BE FRIENDLY TOWARD THE FRG BUT ALSO A POSSIBLE SOVIET BELIEF THAT GENSCHER WOULD REMAIN AS FOREIGN MINISTER EVEN IF KOHL AND THE CDU CAME TO POWER.

--SOVIET BEHAVIOR ON BERLIN OVER THE LAST MONTH OR TWO IS ALSO SEEN HERE AS A SIGN THAT THE RUSSIANS WANT TO SUSTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE FRG. OVER PAST DECADES, WHEN US-SOVIET RELATIONS DETERIORATED, BERLIN SERVED THE SOVIETS AS A CONVENIENT PLACE TO REMIND THE US OF OUR VULNERABILITIES. HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS AND THE GDR HAVE ACTED WITH RESTRAINT OVER RECENT MONTHS EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE AGAIN RAISED THE PATROLS ISSUE. ONE COULD SPECULATE THAT THEY NO LONGER FEEL AS FREE TO PRESS US IN BERLIN EVEN WHEN THEIR RELATIONS WITH US DETERIORATE BECAUSE THEY RECOGNIZE THAT BERLIN HAS A NEURALGIC EFFECT IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC AND MAKES IT POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANY GERMAN GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH THE SOVIET UNION. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THINK, HOWEVER, THAT THE FIRMNESS OF OUR RESPONSE ON SOME OF THE CONTENTIONS THAT THEY HAVE RAISED WOULD ALSO HAVE HELPED TO HOLD THEM BACK.

--ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SOVIETS HAVE SO FAR MADE NO CONCESSIONS. THE GERMANS BELIEVE THAT GROMYKO, WHOM GENSCHER'S CLOSEST ASSOCIATES REGARD AS THE KEY MAN ON SOVIET POLICY TOWARD GERMANY, HAS BLOCKED PROGRESS FOR SOME YEARS AND HAS NOT SO FAR BEEN OVERRULED. THEREFORE, IT REMAINS AS UNCERTAIN AS BEFORE, WHEN VIEWED FROM BONN, THAT THE SOVIET UNION CAN MAKE THE DECISIONS REQUIRED TO MOVE DETENTE FORWARD BEYOND ATMOSPHERICS. NOR CAN ONE FORGET THAT THERE ARE LIMITS TO ECONOMIC

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EXCHANGES. SENIOR FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THAT THE FRG COULD EXTEND FURTHER CREDITS BUT IS REACHING THE POLITICAL IF NOT FINANCIAL LIMIT.

5. IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT SOVIET OVERTURES LEAVE THE FRG SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSED AND UNCERTAIN. NOBODY IN BONN IS REALLY SURE WHETHER THE SOVIET UNION COULD CONDUCT ONE KIND OF POLICY TOWARD GERMANY AND ANOTHER TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. PEOPLE HERE ARE EVEN LESS SURE WHETHER THE FRG COULD POLITICALLY TOLERATE CONTINUING ITS OWN DETENTE WITH THE SOVIET UNION IF THERE WERE A

COLLAPSE OF SALT AND A GENUINE DETERIORATION OF SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS.

6. IN SHORT, IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER IN ITS RELATIONS TOWARD MOSCOW, BONN CAN ZIG WHILE WE ZAG--AND EVEN LESS CERTAIN WHETHER IT WOULD WISH TO. EVER SINCE WORLD WAR II, THE US AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC HAVE GENERALLY BEEN IN PHASE IN PURSUING THE SAME LINE TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN COMPLETELY IN STEP (AS IN THE EARLY 1960'S AND 1970'S). IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR ANY GERMAN GOVERNMENT TO BE NEGOTIATING WITH THE SOVIET UNION ON POLITICAL, MILITARY OR ECONOMIC MATTERS WHILE THE US AND RUSSIA WERE STEPPING UP THE ARMS RACE AND PUBLICLY ATTACKING EACH OTHER. MOREOVER, EVEN THOUGH OPPOSITION LEADER KOHL HAS ATTEMPTED TO PURSUE AS MODERATE A COURSE TOWARD THE EAST AS HIS OWN RIGHT WING WILL ALLOW, HE COULD PROBABLY NOT RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO ASSERT THAT A CONTINUATION OF GERMAN DETENTE POLICY IN THE FACE OF MOSCOW-WASHINGTON FRICTION REPRESENTED A DISSERVICE TO THE ALLIANCE ON WHICH GERMAN FREEDOM RESTS. A CLASSIC DILEMMA FOR THE FRG WOULD BE HOW TO TREAT BREZHNEV IF HE CAME HERE BUT MADE A SHOW OF CANCELLING PLANS FOR VISITING WASHINGTON.

7. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE FRG TO

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CHANGE ITS DETENTE POLICY. A GENUINE GERMAN INTEREST IN THE BENEFITS OF DETENTE HAS DEVELOPED, DESPITE THE

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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USMISSION USBERLIN
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GROWING SKEPTICISM ABOUT ITS VALUE. THOUGH GENSCHER MAY HAVE REJECTED BREZHNEV'S OVERTURES IN MOSCOW OUT OF HAND, SOME SENIOR OFFICIALS IN THE SPD (LIKE BRANDT AND BAHR) MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN SO INCLINED TO DO SO. THE SPD FEELS MORE COMFORTABLE WITH DETENTE THAN WITH THE OPPOSITE. MOREOVER, THE NEW GOVERNING MAYOR OF BERLIN, STOBBE, FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT A CONTINUED OPENING TOWARD THE EAST IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN BERLIN'S VITALITY.

8. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT SCHMIDT'S THINKING ON THIS SUBJECT HAS ADVANCED TO THE POINT WHERE HE WILL BE PREPARED TO RAISE WITH THE PRESIDENT SOME OF THE CONSIDERATIONS OUTLINED ABOVE. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION
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THAT SENIOR GERMAN OFFICIALS ARE ONLY NOW BECOMING AWARE OF SOME OF THE HAZARDS THAT A DIFFERENTIATED MOSCOW POLICY COULD POSE TO THE FRG AND TO THE PRESENT COALITION. HOWEVER, ONE OF THE REASONS WE BELIEVE SCHMIDT WILL WISH TO DISCUSS EAST-WEST RELATIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT WILL BE IN ORDER TO ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN THE CLEAREST POSSIBLE PICTURE OF WHERE WE STAND IN OUR RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW AND WHERE WE THINK WE ARE GOING. MEANWHILE, THE FRANKNESS WITH WHICH GERMAN LEADERS HAVE BRIEFED US ON WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN THE FRG AND THE UNITED STATES INDICATES THAT THE FRG IS NOT INTERESTED IN ANY BASIC REORIENTATION OF ITS PRESENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR. THE REALITIES IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS THAT CANNOT BE IGNORED. NOBODY HERE IS THINKING OF RAPALLO.
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